

COMPUTERS/HILLEL SEGAL

Prodex ranks as ultimate tickler

PC programs that help organize and prioritize tasks or that offer personal telephone directories with auto-dialing capabilities often are more trouble to set up than they're worth.

An exception is Prodex, an \$89.95 package that combines to-do lists, client and prospect data bases, auto-dialing and other functions in a unique fashion—and the result is ideal for many executives and sales people.

To use Prodex, you must have an IBM PC or PC-compatible computer, preferably with a color monitor and a modem for auto-dialing. You can still use the program if you don't have a color monitor or modem. But I predict that you'll want to add at least the modem in short order.

What's so special about Prodex that it's worth investing in extra

equipment? A lot!

Here are its key features:

■ **Phone list with auto dial.** Of similar programs with this feature, this one is perhaps the best implemented and most handy. First, the program is memory resident and therefore can run even while you're in the middle of another program by just touching a predefined hot key. Second, it's easy to find any entry—all you do is press the first few letters of a name and it appears. And third, dialing is only a matter of pressing F9 when the cursor bar is on a particular entry.

■ **Large note area for each name.** Once you've dialed a number, a large note area, or folder, for that name can easily be opened up on the screen allowing you to make notes while the call is in progress. The date will be entered automatically by touching

F3 and the time by touching F4. These features are missing from competitive programs.

■ **Optional "alert" settings.** You can enter a date to call back individuals in the alert fields of the phone listings. This allows you sort on the alert dates to determine pending call-backs.

■ **Prioritized to-do lists.** Just like the phone list, the to-do lists can also have folders of notes and alert dates attached. The structure and way of using it is identical to the phone list. Also, it can be accessed at any time, even when you're in the middle of another program.

■ **Phone log.** For those who want or need to keep track of phone calls, either for billing purposes or to track long-distance telephone charges, this feature is a breeze.

Again F3 automatically enters the date and F4 enters the time. Just type in the person's name and any comment about the call and you have a complete running record.

On the downside, while Prodex is exceptionally easy to use after you know how, it takes an hour or so of fooling around with the commands to get the hang of it. And the manual is terrible. I reread it several times before giving up and calling the publisher to clarify several commands. In retrospect, however, had I been more patient, the features would have become apparent with use.

Also, like many new programs, it's always in the process of being improved, and future versions will undoubtedly be even better.

The bottom line: Don't wait. Prodex is the best program of its type around, and will help you be more productive from the first day you install it on your computer.

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